Annual Report, 1903.

TO THE

ST. COLUMB MAJOR RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL.

Gentlemen,

Herewith I beg to submit to you my Fifth Annual Report on the Health and Sanitary condition of your District in 1903.

We shall have to go back a great number of years to find one to compare with the unfavourable meteorological conditions which prevailed throughout that year, not only was it abnormally wet, but rough, stormy and sunless. Under such adverse climatic conditions, it would not be surprising if the District's death rate had been unfavourably affected and especially the mortality arising from diseases of the Respiratory Organs, but such was not the case; the general death rate is much lower and the Zymotic Death Rate and Infectious Diseases Rate are each better and show up to considerable advantage; in fact there is an improvement all along the line, the Infantile and old age mortality rates showing considerable reductions.

A very gratifying feature of the year, was the comparative absence of Zymotic Diseases.

Scarlet Fever, which we will always have with us, was present in a very mild degree in St. Columb from April to July inclusive. Seven cases in all were reported which assumed a sporadic character and showed no tendency to spread, all the cases recovering after running a benign course.

Mumps made its appearance also in a mild form at the latter end of the year, but with these exceptions, the District was practically free from infectious disease.

Typhoid Fever, for the second year in succession, was conspicuous by its absence. As it is always an unpleasant feature in a Sanitary Report, to have to record the visitation of this Zymotic, pointing as it undeniably does to some imperfection in the working of the Sanitary machinery of the District, it is no less gratifying to be in a position to report its absence for two years following.

Diphtheria. The above remarks apply also to Diphtheria, with the exception that one mild case occurred in Padstow Rural in the form of Membranous Croup. It is no less disquieting to hear that this Zymotic has made its appearance in the District, in any form, and it would seem to have come as a harbinger to give us timely warning that our very slenderly equipped Sanitary armour, notably the want of an Isolation Hospital, is totally inadequate for dealing with any potential outbreak of this formidable disease.

The epidemic of Diphtheria at St. Columb Minor in 1899 is still fresh in our memory; it made its appearance there as at Padstow Rural in the form of Diphtheritic Croup, but whereas the Padstow case proved only a passing guest, our St. Columb Minor visitant acquired a footing, and despite every effort to restrict the spread of the disease, no less than twenty well defined cases were notified before it was effectually controlled, the insanitary state of the village no doubt contributing largely to the dissemination of the disorder.

SANITARY MATTERS.

The number of Visits of Inspection and Inquiry which have been made during the year were

Medical Officer of Health	...	28
Inspector of Nuisances	...	194
	Total	222

As a result of these visits the following Sanitary Work was accomplished :—

TABULAR SUMMARY OF INSPECTION.

1.	Nuisances, accumulation of Refuse dealt with ...	61
2.	New Drains laid	4
3.	Old drains relaid, repaired or cleaned	6
4.	New Closets built	8
5.	Wells or Pumps repaired, deepened or cleaned ...	2
6.	Dairies inspected	5
7.	Slaughter Houses inspected	19
8.	Houses disinfected and lime washed	5
9.	Notices isssued as the result of Complaints	32
	Total	142

DRAINAGE.

In addition to several drains having been repaired and put in order during the year, the very important work of draining the town of St. Columb Major has been in progress and is rapidly approaching the stage of completion.

This laudable piece of engineering when fully accomplished, will among its many advantages prove a source of very great gratification to the local Riparian Authorities at Mawgan, who will be much consoled with the knowledge that their little river at the Vale of Lanherne will no longer be liable to contamination by the Sewage of our town.

The Rural District Council also will no less enjoy the satisfaction of knowing that this urgently needed piece of Sanitary Work has been at last accomplished.

The question of the Drainage of St. Columb Minor is still in contemplation. My opinions with regard to the Sanitary Condition of this village, are too well known to the Council to need repetition, consequently I will not lay myself open to the charge of irrelevancy by recapitulating them.

Reverting to the scheme devised by Mr. Worth for effecting improvment in the place, I stated in my report of last year, that in my opinion the principle of the flushing boxes was in theory excellent, but that it could not be carried into the domain of practical utility at St. Columb Minor, where there is little or no water available for flushing purposes, and this is still my conviction.

Before the advent of warm weather and pending the prospective sewerage of the village, it might be desirable to circulate among the cottagers a few leaflets enjoining them to throw their dirty greasy water upon their gardens where possible, instead of on the highway, where the nose so readily detects, what chemical analysis is not able to lay bare.

HOUSING OF THE WORKING CLASSES.

The very perceptible improvement in House accommodation throughout the District, which began shortly after my gloomy observations on this subject in my report of 1901, is still maintained and we hear nothing now of the hardships that were experienced in that and previous years, by the Working Classes from all quarters through overcrowding.

In St. Columb town where the greatest hardships obtained, three new Cottages have been erected and others have been renovated.

There is still room for improvement however in the very important matter of air space and ventilation and many structural sanitary defects require to be remedied. In very many workmans' dwellings, the lower window sash is a fixture, in others the top sash is undetachable, and in not an insignificant few, both sashes from being closed for so long a time, plead immemorial usage and wont open at all. It is also the exception to find any adequate provision made for Ventilation in sleeping apartments of small houses, where you find one bed-room with a fire-place you will find a dozen without. and the only ray of light admttted in many instances is through one or two square holes designed as ostensible windows never meant to open.

The presence also of mud floors in some small Cottages, does not conform to a high hygienic standard. Not infrequently they are found giving in many places and forming reservoirs which harbour filth of all kinds. They should never be permitted to exist.

Finally no sanitary measure should be neglected in connection with a dwelling house, which in any degree tends to instil into the minds of the Working Classes, the inestimable value of the Elixer of fresh air, and the Gospel of Pure Air, Cleanliness and Ventilation should be indelibly impressed on the minds of all School-children as a most essential feature of their Education.

The whole of the Workshops of the District are in a satisfactory state of Cleanliness and there is manifest improvement in the condition of Dairies and Slaughter Houses.

SCAVENGING.

This is carried out as already reported to you in my previous Reports.

In St. Columb Town where a Scavenger is employed for this purpose by the Council a considerable portion of the man's time is occupied in other work than rightly pertains to his office, such as laying down Drains, &c. The time at his disposal however apart from this he makes good use of, as the very satisfactory condition of our streets will testify.

NUISANCES.

Those dealt with during the year were of the usual kinds pertaining to Rural Districts, such as refuse accumulation, Piggeries, Drains, &c. They call for the supervision of the Sanitary Inspector whose work in this way is considerable as you are aware from the monthly records.

WATER SUPPLY.

This has been amply sufficient for the requirements of the District throughout the year, more than adequate in many places.

Great improvement has taken place physically in the supply of St. Columb Town, the water here constantly became turbid after rain, but this is most exceptional now, notwithstanding the phenomenally wet weather that has prevailed throughout most of the year.

It is sufficient in quantity and pre-eminently soft and pure.

The various supplies are not examined periodically, but when in consequence of illness suspicion is cast on any particular supply the Council laudably provides for its analysis, and if found to be impure, steps are taken to remove the source of pollution or procure another supply. During the past year suspicion attached to a supply of water from a well at Truan Farm, St. Enoder, in consequence of an illness affecting one of the household. A sample of the water was submitted to analysis and found to contain lead in such quantity as amply to account for the symptoms manifested. Instructions were given for the well to be immediately closed.

Eleven Certificates of Supply have been granted to New Dwelling Houses.

PUBLIC HEALTH.

The number of Children born during the year was 288, viz.: 145 Boys and 143 Girls, giving a Birth Rate per 1000 per annum of 26·799 against 21·892 for last year, when the births were forty nine less in number.

Death Rate.—During the year there were 143 deaths registered, giving a general Death Rate of 13·306 per 1000 per annum, against 164 and 15·02 respectively for last year.

The District's natural increase is 145. 32 deaths were of Infants under one year, giving an Infant Mortality of 111 per thousand births, against 121 in the previous year.

Eleven of the Infantile deaths occurred from Premature Birth as against four in 1902.

The Infantile deaths from all other causes were ten less than in the previous year.

At the other extremes of life 59 of the total deaths were those of persons over 65, and of these 21 died between the ages of 70 and 80, nineteen were over 80, and six over 90.

The chief causes of death were as follows :—

Bronchitis	...	6	Cardiac	...	9
Pneumonia	...	8	Inquests	...	5
Phthisis	...	10	Cancer	...	12
Premature Birth		11	Infantile Diarrhœa		1

The most noticeable and regrettable feature of the above is the very slight diminution in the mortality from Cancer over last year, when sixteen deaths were recorded.

This scourge has steadily increased in fatality ever since the commencement of Civil registration, the mortality attributed to it having more than doubled within the last forty years.

The problem of the cause of Cancer has been handed down to us unsolved from the Nineteenth Century, and the question is now in the hands of the Cancer Research Commission, and we look forward with good hope to the investigation now in progress affording us some enlightenment respecting the nature and origin of this ghastliest of maladies.

"Consumption" and other forms of Tuberculosis.—The deaths from Consumption (a no less devastating scourge of the human race) numbered ten, an increase of one over last year, those caused from other Tuberculous diseases however show considerable reduction, only two from Tubercle, as distinct from Phthisis, as compared with eleven for 1902 which is gratifying.

The subject of the control of Phthisis has made great strides during the last few years. Among the many salutary measures that are being adopted for lessening the spread of infection from the disease, not the least important is the restriction as to promiscuous spitting, but the omission to include Public Houses in the Bye Laws regarding this pernicious habit, will produce an insensible effect in the diminution of the disorder.

The provision made by your Council for the thorough Disinfection and Cleansing of all Dwellings where it is known that death has resulted from the disease or where removal has taken place is a most laudable one, tending as it will in no inconsiderable degree to remove one of the principal factors at work in propogating the infection of Phthisis, to wit the germs from a previous case, and the success of this measure will be greatly contributed to, when Tuberculosis is added to the Schedule of notifiable diseases, a consumation very much to be desired. In many Districts provision has been made for voluntary notification as a tentative measure.

ZYMOTIC DISEASES.

15 cases of Infectious Disease were notified during the year, equal to a rate of 1·38 per 1000, against 1·83 in 1902 and 3.38 in 1901.

The cost in fees was £1 12s. 6d.

The notifications recorded were as follows :—

Scarlet Fever	...	7	Continued Fever	...	3
Erysipelas	...	4	Diptheria	...	1

The cases of Scarlet Fever as I stated in the preamble of my report were very mild and confined to the St. Columb District. No death occurred.

Of the 4 cases of Erysipelas, two occurred at Newlyn and two in St. Columb Minor.

The most important occasion of this Zymotic is found where the immediate surroundings are not wholesome, through gross neglect of the common laws of hygiene. Its incidence is chiefly among the poor, where most ignorance and apathy in this respect is displayed. In a word where filth and insalubrity obtain in the vicinity of dwellings, Erysipelas will make its appearance, and conversely, where a healthy environment is observed its presence will not be felt. The same remarks apply also to Diphtheria. As I stated in the beginning of my Report, one case only of this Zymotic was recorded this year, as compared with twenty at St. Columb Minor in 1899 where drainage is non existent.

The following are the Subjects which come up from last year and are still undisposed of :—

1. Drainage of St. Columb Minor.
2. No Isolation Hospital.
3. No Disinfecting Apparatus.
4. Improper Use of the Water Tables of the Public Highway.

Appended are official Tables 1, 2, 3 and 4.

I remain Gentlemen,

Your obedient Servant,

F. D. Sutherland McMahon,

Medical Officer of Health.